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## Fundamental Concepts of the Arya Samāj



By Acharya Bramdeo

**Q: *What is the Arya Samāj?***

**A:** Arya Samāj consists of two words: Arya, that is noble, and (ii) Samāj refers to an association of people. Arya Samāj is therefore ‘the association of Aryas or noble persons’.

**Q: *How does one become an Arya?***

**A:** The nobility of an Arya is pedigree or lineage-based, and thus not acquired by the status of one’s parents at birth. To be more precise, a person is an Arya on the basis of his character (*guna*), actions (*karma*) and innate temperament (*svabhāva*).

**Q: *Is there any other requirement to be an Arya?***

**A:** Yes. An Arya never lives in a make-up situation. He is identified by the perfect harmony between thoughts (*manasā*), words (*vāchā*) and deeds (*karmanā*). This unity leads to purity and purity leads to spirituality. The shloka from Chanakya Neeti’s is most befitting:

*Manasyekama vachasyekama, karmanyekama mahātmanām |*

*Manasyanyata vachasyanyata, karmanyanyata durātmanāma ||*

Men of evil mind have one thing in the mind, another thing in their speech and something else in their actions. Men of great mind have the same thing in their thoughts, words and deeds, meaning what they think they talk about and what they talk about they translate into actions.

**Q: *It seems more a dream in today’s world***

**A:** The word Arya is, more-than-often, misunderstood and given a narrow meaning – associated to a religion, race, society, creed, community ...etc.

An Arya is a citizen of the world who upholds the concept of the global village: *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, i.e. the world is but one family, transcending the geographical and other man-made barriers.

Those who have studied chemistry will recall that a diamond is carbon, the changes resulting from intense underground pressure. And the most lustrous sparkling diamond is but a rough stone that has undergone attentive cutting and polishing processes.

Likewise an Arya’s personality is trimmed down by the tenets of Dharma (virtue). Noble, virtuous and humane qualities embellish the human character.

**Q: *Is Arya Samāj a sect or religious group?***

**A:** The Arya Samāj is neither a sect nor an exclusive religious group. The 6<sup>th</sup> principle of the Arya Samāj clearly defines its mission and vision as: *‘The prime object of this society is to do good to the whole world, that is to uplift the physical, moral and spiritual standards of all.’* The words are crystal clear: a universal goal. The founder of the Arya Samāj, Maharishi Swami Dayanand Saraswati himself stated: *“I have not come to preach any new dogma or religion, nor to establish a new religious order, nor to be proclaimed a new messiah or Pontiff. I have only brought before my people the light of Vedic Wisdom...”*

**Q: *Why the Arya Samāj?***

**A** The political, economic and social conditions prevailing in the nineteenth century presented to a dismal picture of a society: illiteracy, ignorance proliferated; orthodox / irrational thoughts, beliefs and rituals totally eclipsed the essence of dharma; widespread social evils, prejudice and partiality (creed, caste, colour, religion, gender bias, etc.) had eroded the human aspects of life; centuries of foreign domination had reduced the glory and valour of Aryavarta to shambles. The Arya Samāj was created as a reform and renaissance movement in all fields of life, a total revolution against all the above malpractices and to bring forth truth as known by the senses, reason and revelation; indeed a lifeline for the disintegrated and factional ridden society.

**Q: *What is the contribution of the Arya Samāj to humanity?***

**A:** The Arya Samāj re-affirmed the authority of the Vedas as the first revelation and scripture of humanity. Promoting the Universal Vedic values, it has triggered many universal concepts across international organisations, not-so-modern as they seem as they are derived from the teachings of the Vedas ...a seminal form of knowledge from where all true knowledge has been, is still being and will continue to be expounded:

- » Compulsory education for all;
- » Respect for parents, teachers, benefactors;
- » Women’s rights, Children’s rights, Human Rights, etc., imbued with the concept of ‘Rights with Responsibilities’;
- » Good governance & Ethical dealings at all times;
- » Equal opportunities where meritocracy is based solely on competences, and there is no exploitation of man by man;
- » Globalisation not limited to trade and economics but to promote universal welfare;
- » Self-rule is better than foreign dominance in spite of whatever facilities they may provide; and several other international concepts

**Q: *What underlines the ten principles of the Arya Samāj?***

**A:** In a nutshell, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> principles pertain to the duty of man towards the Supreme Being; the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> focus upon the duty of man towards himself; and the 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> point out the duty of man as a social being.

*They are eternal with universal appeal and acceptability.* It points to virtuous living where dharma sharpens the discriminative power of one’s intellect: to

differentiate between right and wrong, proper and improper, good and bad, virtue and evil, duties/ responsibilities and carelessness.

**Q: *Why so much emphasis on ethics (dharma)?***

**A:** Ethics throughout all our dealings will ensure social progress: a society free from unlimited desire. It is the endeavour and aim of Arya Samāj to help in creating such a society. Sage Manu's ten tenets of Dharma and Sage Patanjali's Yama – Niyama form a universal code of ethics that should be integrated in teaching curriculum at all levels.

Today's turmoil hitting people, societies, nations and the world is due to the fact that progress is measured in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is calculated on consumption, leading over consumption and depletion of world resources.

The Vedas advocate progress in terms of increase in the physical, spiritual and social welfare, a unique approach which the world is reckoning as the Gross Happiness Index.

Each and every one need be ever aware that our universe has sufficient resources to fulfil the needs of all NOT the greed of a few!

**Q: *How do we gauge the success rate of the Arya Samāj?***

The benchmark to measure the success rate in achieving its objectives is the sum total of the individual efforts of each and every one to live up to the universal ideals of the Vedas, summed up in the 10 principles of the Arya Samāj.

*Pointing one finger at the other person equals to three fingers pointing towards our own self!* Therefore, let us strive to align our thoughts, speech and deeds in line with the universal human / living values.

The world will be transformed by the transformation of each and every single person as the individual is the smallest unit of society.

**Acharya Bramdeo Mokoonlall**

**Atlanta, GA, USA & Arya Sabha Mauritius**